

## ROOM 18 ARTS ARTICLE

**First Nations communities of Australia maintain a deep connection to, and responsibility for, Country/Place and have holistic values and belief systems that are connected to the land, sea, sky and waterways.** Do we impact First Nations people's connection?

Linked to their learning in Religion about Creation and the Year 5 curriculum in sustainability, and the Arts, Room 18 have been looking at the impact waste may have on traditional Indigenous art and culture.

Our learning journey began looking at a series of Indigenous bark paintings by artist Nongirra Marawili, a Madarrpa /Galpu woman from Baniyala in north-east Arnhem Land, Northern Territory. In the community in which Marawili lives and paints, and in many Indigenous communities, it is tradition to use natural materials to celebrate and pass on cultural knowledge and practises through expressions in art.



Marawili's striking bark paintings show detailed line work in rich browns, orange, yellow and white ochres.



Nongirra Marawili, Yolju people, Northern Territory, born 1938, Darrpirra, Northern Territory, *Lightning*, 2017, Yirkala, Northern Territory, earth pigments on stringybark, 214.0 x 77.0 cm, 224.2 x 83.7 cm, 230.5 x 77.7 cm, 211.0 x 80.0 cm; Acquisition through Tamarthi: Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art supported by BHP 2018, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, © Nongirra Marawili/Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre.

We also looked at one piece that was ablaze with a bright pink.

The piece was traditional in style and meaning and an outcome of materials from the Earth, but much to everyone's surprise, the pink was not made from plant matter; it was made from a recycled printing cartridge. We knew the Artist used the ink but questioned 'where did it come from?'



recycled print toner pigment, Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre, Yirrkala, Northern Territory, 2019; photo: David Wickens.

Yohan said, "Waste has impacted Marawili's painting because the magenta she was using was from an ink cartridge that someone had thrown out and it was found all the way in Arnhem Land. That is bad because something we threw out came all the way to Aboriginal land that the Arnhem people take care of. "

Lee shared, "The art is traditional because she has painted traditional symbols as the picture but it's modern because magenta isn't a colour paint that Indigenous people can create from nature in that area because they didn't use all of the colours and they didn't use cartridges, just ochre."

Jake's thought, "This art is traditional because of the style with dots and lines etc. The art is modern because the magenta pink colour is from a printer cartridge that has been dumped in Arnhem land."

Finally, Sienna suggested, "We impacted Marawili's colour palette when our waste reached the untouched land of Arnhem land, pigmenting the ochre with Magenta from the ink cartridge. You use make ochre by adding water to crushed rock to make a clay-based paint and she would have used trees and twigs. People take the material away by chopping down trees and smashing down their resources and littering."

Room 18 students had rich discussions around ocean waste and it's movement around the world. They discussed land waste and ways to reduce it.

Using Indigenous weaving techniques, we made a tapestry from both found and donated materials: bark, tree nuts, tree seeds, feathers, wool and string. With the help of artist in residence, Diana Zampatti, this indigenous-inspired tapestry was our offering for Intercultural Week.



Nongirna Marawili, Yolnu people, Northern Territory, born 1938, Darrpirra, Northern Territory, *Baratjala* 2019, Yirrkala, Northern Territory, earth pigments, recycled print toner on stringybark, 241.0 x 100.0 cm Copyright Nongirna Marawili /Buka-Larrngay Mula Centre.

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